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EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT OF OFFICERS
THROUGH COACHING

HENRY A. FRENCH

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EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT
OF OFFICERS
THROUGH COACHING

by

Henry A. French

Lieutenant Commander, United States Navy

Submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN
MANAGEMENT

United States Naval Postgraduate School
Monterey, California

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**This work is accepted as fulfilling
the research requirements for the degree of**

MASTER OF SCIENCE

IN

MANAGEMENT

from the

United States Naval Postgraduate School

ABSTRACT

The pressures of time, competitive atmosphere of service life, and often authoritarian nature of officers frequently cause seniors to overlook their responsibilities for the timely development of subordinate officers. The vast sources of untapped creative potential and increased efficiency thus lying dormant are an injustice to the individual and the service.

The current literature by authors with operational experience in the field of executive development is reviewed with the purpose of suggesting appropriate techniques for seniors to utilize in accomplishing their development responsibilities.

The objectives and skills of successful coaching through the delegation of meaningful tasks that extend the subordinate are discussed. Superior-subordinate mutual goal setting and an eclectic approach to non-directive development counseling are recommended.

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND FACTORS AFFECTING THE PROBLEM

I. THE PROBLEM

A need for officer, executive development. The highly competitive atmosphere of service life and the frequently authoritarian nature of senior officers has in many units created a "sink or swim" attitude toward the development of subordinate officers. This feeling of lack of responsibility and laissez faire attitude is an injustice to the individual, the unit, and the service. Vast sources of creative potential and increased efficiency lie dormant due to inadequate development procedures.

It is the purpose of this study to (1) explore some of the factors involved in developing subordinate officers; (2) to discuss some of the current thinking on executive development by industry and influential authors in the field; (3) to draw some theoretical and practical guidelines for coaching subordinates; and (4) to present a method of counseling which can be easily learned and utilized as a medium for the development process.

Executive development programs. We know from past experience that the individual needs another's assistance, if for no other reason than that he can thus see himself as others see him. Executive development program procedure calls for each executive, after appraising his men, to hold constructive discussions with them individually. Objectively, he can assist them in pointing out the changes in performance,

attitude, and personality which they should make in the interests of their personal development and in the interests of the organization.¹ How often does this occur today? How much efficiency is lost through the failure to utilize the talents of subordinates? How many junior officer resignations are really the result of a lack of interest on the part of the superior and a breakdown in two-way communications? Answers to such questions are difficult to quantify, but truthful, soul-searching reflection by numerous senior officers indicates significant weakness in this area.

Effectiveness of the unit and the service. Failure to develop and utilize adequately the capabilities of subordinates is contrary to the best interests of everyone concerned. Not only does the service suffer in the future due to the lack of experience and training of the underdeveloped officer, but the unit suffers in the short-run. Superiors who do not become intimately involved in developing their juniors are not sufficiently aware of their present or potential abilities. Often the senior has not even afforded the junior an opportunity to try, assumes he lacks the training and ability, and proceeds to do it himself. This is wasteful of talent and personnel and indicates that the superior probably has poor administrative control over his officers.

Personal improvement. When questioned concerning subordinate development, seniors often say, "If they have doubts,

¹R. R. Blake and J. S. Mouton, "Power, People, and Performance Reviews," Advanced Management, July-August, 1961, pp. 13-17.

they can ask." Can they, in fact? Is the door really open? If the senior does not choose to bring up the subject and by his busy, hurried attitude when approached sets up barriers to communication, is the junior really able to ask where he stands and how he can improve? The tendency is to avoid the issue and continue on, hoping that the junior's problems will work themselves out.

Feeding back to subordinates the results of their work embodies what psychologists call the "principle of knowledge of performance." This principle is one of the most thoroughly validated principles of learning.² It is also unfortunately one of the most neglected in officer training. As knowledge of performance increases, learning increases both in quantity and quality. This knowledge gives the trainee information on what response he should learn. Research on human learning shows that very frequently the trainee takes a long time to learn simply because he spends too much time in learning incorrect things, which must be unlearned, and irrelevant things, which replace and interfere with the desired learning objectives.³

Another reason why knowledge of performance aids learning is that it affects motivation to keep learning. One of the basic requirements for motivation is that the trainee set goals for himself. But once goals are set, they will

²Bernard J. Covner, "The Communication of Merit Ratings," Personnel, September, 1953, p. 89.

³Nathaniel Cantor, The Learning Process for Managers, pp. 61-102.

serve as incentive to personal improvement only as long as the person experiences some manifestation of progress toward those goals. People tend to abandon a goal if they cannot move toward it. This is only natural and to do otherwise leads to tension and frustration. Consequently, the sense of movement toward a goal is an absolute requisite for motivation to learn. Personal observation has provided examples where above average and potentially outstanding officers have given up their young careers although making good progress, simply because they could not experience their accomplishments. They apparently felt all the frustration and loss of interest that ordinarily characterized a person who was failing to learn.⁴

"Research suggests that many men of little better than average ability have achieved outstanding success in positions of great importance, primarily because they learned to use their strengths well, minimize their weaknesses, and, most important, pursue their objectives relentlessly."⁵ While development is primarily the responsibility of the individual himself, superiors can accelerate this process to a significant degree. The rewards for the effort will be mutually beneficial.

Morale. When a senior fails to take an active interest in developing his subordinates, he will usually keep them in

⁴Robert N. McMurtry, "Manhunt for Top Executives," Harvard Business Review, January-February, 1954, pp. 55-57.

⁵John F. Chapman, "Thinking Ahead: Trends in Management Development," Harvard Business Review, March-April, 1954, pp. 29-30.

a condition of anxiety and insecurity. His tactless advice and admonition, avoidance of constructive comment, or indifference is not productive of a favorable communicative atmosphere or high morale. "Military morale, like industrial morale, rests to an important degree on satisfactory adjustments and satisfying human relationships, and in this field counseling has proven itself useful."⁶

II. FACTORS AFFECTING THE PROBLEM

Fitness report system. The principal factor affecting the problem of inadequate executive development is the excessively narrow interpretation given the following excerpt from the Bureau of Naval Personnel Manual, 1959:

As a general rule, a reporting senior should not show the officer his fitness report unless adverse matter is contained thereon, or, in the opinion of the reporting senior, appreciable benefit will be derived by showing the report and discussing its contents with the officers. Whenever possible, the reporting senior should bring incidents indicative of minor deficiencies to the attention of the officer in a manner best calculated to encourage improvement.⁷

The reasons behind not showing the report to the ratee are fairly well substantiated, have been formulated through years of practical experience, and will not be challenged here. The above excerpt does not specifically prohibit counseling subordinates on their performance. However, it is not difficult to comprehend why this interpretation is common. The general feeling is that any communication of the report's

⁶Carl R. Rogers, Counseling and Psychotherapy, p. 9.

⁷Bureau of Naval Personnel Manual, 1959. p. 76.

contents must be viewed as adverse and detrimental to one's career.

It is appropriate to note at this point that this paper will not advocate showing fitness reports. These reports are the responsibility of the command and it must retain exclusive authority in their completion and submission. Although the criteria for an areas of performance contained in the report are excellent guides in laying the groundwork for a development program, it will be shown that divulging an officer's marks is not required. It will also be indicated, however, that when the senior sets the goals, rates the progress, and assigns marks without communications, learning and development will be impeded. A subordinate may have a far different view of his senior's attitude toward him and his progress than is actually the case.

Lack of emphasis from the top. The interest of top management in appraisal and counseling is crucial for establishing a climate conducive to effective evaluation and guidance. Unfortunately, commanders often have not seen fit to recognize adequately the place of development as a function of their supervisors. To the departmental supervisor, when left to his own devices, helping subordinates develop has not paid off because he loses the investment of time and effort when men leave. He is, moreover, often inclined to view a man's development as a man's own responsibility, consistent with the American philosophy of individualism and of initiative. Supervisors need incentives to motivate them in developing subordinates, and they need assistance in the form of

training in appraisal, in knowledge of behavior, and in skill in counseling. They can proceed with the task either as a chore for which they merely go through motions, or as a valuable aid in helping subordinates become more effective. When appreciable recognition is given by command to the importance of developing men, the degree of emphasis by lower echelons will increase accordingly. Every manager must be made to understand that the development of his immediate subordinates is an important, if not the most important, responsibility he has. Rather than a haphazard chore, it must become a standard procedure and challenging objective.

The key person for assuring that a policy of developing subordinates has real meaning is the commanding officer. What he says, but, more significantly, what he does to indicate the importance and value of developing people through coaching, provides the guiding example, directly for his own subordinates and indirectly for the entire command.

The importance of the commanding officer's policy and actions can be demonstrated by the following example. In this case, the stated policy of the commander was that subordinates should be encouraged to learn by doing, that people learn by making mistakes, and that department heads should make every effort to provide opportunities for subordinates to perform. Soon after promulgation of these policies, a department head gave one of his assistants a project which involved the preparation of a report to be submitted to the commanding officer. The assistant researched the project, submitted the report via the chain of command, and the department head approved it.

When the commander reviewed it, he found an error and severely reprimanded his head of department. His comment was, "Don't ever let this kind of mistake happen again."

This made it quite clear to the department head, as the result of this and other similar instances, that the policy was not really that subordinates should be given chances to make mistakes. The commanding officer's impatience when mistakes were made indicated more effectively than the words of the stated policy that, as the head of department later stated, "If you want to get along with the old man, you do everything yourself. If you don't, you are sure to get burned."

Getting superiors to coach. The willingness of superiors to devote conscious effort to the problems of developing subordinates depends mostly on their attitude. If superiors are concerned primarily with their own position and status, subordinates will have little opportunity to grow and develop.

Managers have numerous cliches which serve as rationalizations of failure to do this critical work of development. Typical comments include: "I don't need special counseling sessions; my door is always open." "I'm constantly talking to my people." "Let sleeping dogs lie." "There isn't time." "I'm not a trained psychologist. I can't counsel my subordinates." "Officers naturally want to get ahead and will develop on their own initiative." The list is extensive, but seldom do the arguments stand up under careful analysis.

One problem that executives often fail to consider in their rationalizations is the recognition of their own involvement in the situation at hand. The superior is very much

involved both intellectually and emotionally in every friction point within his organization. He must be able to look first at his own faults, rather than transferring the entire blame for difficulties that arise to other persons and factors.

Superiors who are reluctant to coach fail to comprehend that one real attribute of leadership is conscious attention to the development of subordinates--a genuine interest in their training and development. The superior who is required to make a conscientious effort to develop his people will see these same subordinates begin to exhibit a new respect for his leadership. Then, too, the process reciprocates. It is axiomatic that the teacher always learns more than the student. Here will be a new impetus to the superior to look objectively at his own development.

Resistance on the part of subordinates. The typical executive-development procedure is for the superior to appraise the man's performance, followed by an interview in connection with the appraisal. During this interview the superior communicates his evaluation as accurately as possible to let the subordinate know how he is doing; attempts to gain his acceptance of the evaluation; and tries to get him to follow the plan the superior outlined for his improvement. Unless skillfully conducted, however, such an interview may be an unpleasant experience for both parties and cause the interviewee to resist improving on the job.

If it is assumed that people desire to correct faults, that the superior's judgment is acceptable to the subordinate, and that he is able to change in the manner the superior

specifies, then the desired aims can probably be achieved. However, it is not unusual for subordinates to regard their superiors' expectations as unreasonable, their criticisms unjustified, and the suggested methods of work inefficient.⁸

Some psychologists question whether people really want to know precisely how well their boss feels they are doing and where they stand. Actually, these men say, most of us would rather be reassured than appraised. Communication of unfavorable remarks may constitute a threat of change to the recipient--a disturbing implication that he has in some way been found wanting. Poor communication of criticism may not only inhibit good superior-subordinate relationships, but may affect a man's total working effectiveness if he suffers an undue amount of ego loss. An individual's effectiveness is considered to be a product not only of knowledge and skills, but also of his total feeling about himself and about his relation with other people.⁹

Factors leading to problems of resistance often stem from a difference in perception. Each individual's perceptions tend to be distorted by the values which he brings to a situation. These values stem from previous experiences, his sentiments (loyalties, prejudices, likes and dislikes), his attitudes about himself (what kind of person he is, imagines himself as being, or would like to be), the obligations

⁸Hubert Clay and Leif Olson, "Internships in the Development of People," Personnel Journal, June, 1961, pp. 58-63.

⁹Leland P. Bradford, "A New Look at Management Development," Advanced Management, October, 1958, pp. 10-12.

he feels toward others, the ways he thinks people should behave and how things ought to be, and his objectives and goals. Reality for an individual is whatever his personal values allow him to recognize. He will tend to reconfirm and reinforce these values in specific instances by selecting from the situation those factors which are consistent with his values and by ignoring others which conflict.¹⁰

Resistance to training and change. The training process focuses, in part, on the identification of those defenses that interfere with effective personal functioning in the work setting. While some trainees are able to achieve insight into how they act and react, others markedly resist this process and rigidly adhere to their original views of themselves and the world around them. Much of the resistance to training also springs from resentment at being condescendingly talked to, being supplied with ready-made solutions and over-simplified rules, and being told, "Here's how to do it properly."

When faced with the training, improvement situation, the trainee may feel that he is faced with a negative condition. He then frequently resorts to defense mechanisms in an effort to defend his picture of himself. By utilizing defenses such as repression, rationalization, projection or sublimation, the person distorts reality in such a way that it does not affect him too seriously. He is able to release a good deal of inner conflict, tension, and frustration rather

¹⁰Harold J. Leavitt, Managerial Psychology, pp. 27-36; Norman R. F. Maier, The Appraisal Interview, pp. 203-205.

unconsciously. When repressing the undesirable knowledge of inadequacy and need for change, the trainee may force down into his subconscious those conflicts and frustrations which annoy him. If there is no acceptable solution for the problem in reality, then the solution is found in unreality, by literally forgetting about it.¹¹ The person may invent some excuse, acceptable to his personality, to cover up his failure in a situation or inability to accept change through rationalization. Projecting to other people the blame for something or ascribing responsibility to other persons or events is another way of ignoring one's own part in a problem.¹² Finally, sublimation occurs when the individual unconsciously channels his negative feeling about the situation into other more acceptable forms of expression. He may become passive and withdrawn or aggressive and work extra hard in areas other than those requiring improvement.¹³

A basic requirement for conscious improvement by the officer necessitates that he be willing to face up squarely to his own inadequacies, without rationalizing or minimizing them.

Motivation. Another essential requirement for conscious improvement is that the man must sincerely want to improve.

"Executives do need training. They can learn and grow" in their jobs. The better a man is, it seems, the more he

¹¹Leavitt, op. cit., p. 61.

¹²Ibid., pp. 34-35.

¹³Edward S. Bordin, Psychological Counseling, p. 132.

recognizes the value of training and wants as much of it as possible. It is the weak man, rather than the strong one, who is more likely to resist the idea of training."¹⁴

The officer who coaches subordinates will encounter subordinates of dissimilar competence and motivation. He will encounter those officers who are good, know they are good, yet seek to do better. These fortunately constitute the majority and are a pleasure to coach. Those who are good, know they are good, but do not want advice, will also be encountered. This type usually interprets advice as criticism, and they can be reached only through considerable effort. There are some who are fair, but think they are good, and do not want advice-- a challenge to any leader. Some are fair, want to improve and would like advice. This is the type of officer who will probably benefit most from counseling. Finally, there are officers who are below average, know it, and have a desire to improve. Considerable effort can be expended on this type with usually gratifying results.

While most officers fall into the first category above, even successful officers need frequent reassurance that their work is satisfactory. The matter of reinforcing self-confidence is most important in sustaining motivation.

¹⁴Willard E. Bennett, "Master Plan for Management Development," Harvard Business Review, May-June, 1956, p. 80.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The broad fields of appraisal, merit rating, performance reviews, counseling, and executive development suffer from no dearth of articles, books, and ideas. This review will cover briefly some opinions and ideas of some of the most influential writers and organizations in the specific area of coaching and its associated performance counseling.

Reviewing the present thinking on coaching and the communication of appraisals can begin by reference to Army Regulation 623-105 of September, 1961. This regulation established a new efficiency reporting system, providing for a mandatory counseling session about four months prior to preparation of the efficiency report. It is emphasized in the regulation that the rater's counseling responsibilities are to be distinct from, though related to, his rating responsibilities. It indicates that the purpose of counseling is to advise the officer, to encourage his maximum self-improvement and development, and to help him improve performance. The counseling session and its associated report are intended to serve as a means of developing the individual's self-confidence in his ability to accomplish assigned tasks and to meet new situations and problems. Emphasis is placed upon helping a man know himself and to set his own goals. Additional comment is made that most outstanding and successful commanders and leaders will testify that the development of capable subordinates contributed immeasurably to their own success.

Robert N. McMurry, Senior Partner in a nationally known consulting service in personnel, industrial relations, and market research, has described the autocratic-bureaucratic philosophy of leadership as that which prevails in industry, government, the armed services, and many religious denominations. The concept of authority underlying this philosophy is one of centralization and concentration in a single individual, or at most two or three individuals. The autocrat-bureaucrat exhibits characteristics of leadership such as:

(a) He sets all goals himself in terms of his needs and desires without reference to his followers and often without their knowledge of what he wants. Moreover, these goals are often subjective--not really accomplishments, but activities to foster his greater glory.

(b) He makes little or no effort to eliminate barriers or help his subordinates in new, difficult, or frightening situations.

(c) He permits no participation by those below him in the planning; they simply do what he tells them to do. He gives them instructions piecemeal, and provides no information relative to their competence on the job, his attitudes toward their performance, or the extent to which they are doing a satisfactory or unsatisfactory job.¹

Dr. McMurry goes on to state that the autocrat uses fear as the principal incentive. The co-philosophy to autocratic-bureaucratic is the benevolent autocracy, where the leader uses bribes rather than threats as the motivating force. "In place of fear, he substitutes the advantages of pleasing him, with the implied promise of special rewards for conformity, submissiveness, and docility."² Both philosophies appeal to

¹McMurry, op. cit., pp. 55-56.

²Ibid., p. 56.

the weak or authoritarian type of leader because their controls are essentially rigid, absolute, and easy to administer.

McMurry has shifted his thinking in leadership philosophy where it relates to participation by and development of subordinates. In the article referenced above, he advocated the consultive-participative, or democratic approach which has become somewhat popular in industry and often successful. The executive establishes the goals for his subordinates, explains the conditions, helps to plan and organize the steps to be taken, and outlines the methods to be used to reach the goals. Subordinates are invited to participate in developing the methods to be used, by offering suggestions and criticisms. McMurry warns, however, that a much more qualified leader is required than in an autocracy.³

Subsequently, in his controversial article, "The Case for Benevolent Autocracy," he becomes thoroughly discouraged with "democratic," "participative" management. McMurry advocates discussions between superior and subordinate based on a statement of supervisory expectations rather than conferences in which performance ratings are utilized for advice in subordinate development. He indicates that the immediate superior is often poorly qualified to provide counseling, "at least in the conventional manner."⁴ The superior often lacks the skill for conventional counseling and may appear

³Ibid., pp. 57-62. .

⁴Robert N. McMurry, "The Case for Benevolent Autocracy," Harvard Business Review, January-February, 1958, p. 89.

as a threat to the subordinate's security because of his senior position. Supervisory expectations would consist of three elements:

(a) A position analysis prepared on the basis of the company's formal job description which spells out the place of the incumbent in the organization as a whole, that is, the nature and scope of his duties, responsibilities, authority, to whom he reports and who reports to him,-----.

(b) The employee's statement of his goals and objectives for the ensuing period (usually one year or less).

(c) The superior's statement of what he expects in terms of performance and self-improvement from the employee during the period.⁵

From these elements, mutually acceptable goals and objectives can be developed. The interviews should be constructive and specific rather than critical, admonitory, or general in nature. "This procedure, if properly policed, will force even an autocrat or bureaucrat to show some interest in his subordinates."⁶

Another major writer in the field, Douglas M. McGregor, describes the conventional view managers take in their relations with subordinates in terms of his set of propositions, the first of which he terms "Theory X":

With respect to people, this is a process of directing their efforts, motivating them, controlling their actions, modifying their behavior to fit the needs of the organization.

Without this active intervention by management, people would be passive--even resistant--to organizational needs. They must, therefore, be persuaded, rewarded,

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

punished, controlled--their activities must be directed. This is management's task--in managing subordinate managers or workers. We often sum it up by saying that management consists of getting things done through other people.⁷

"Theory X" continues to assert that the average man is indolent, lacks ambition, dislikes responsibility, and prefers to be led. He is indifferent to organizational needs and is resistant to change.

McGregor suggests a different theory based on more adequate assumptions about human nature and human motivation,

"Theory Y":

People are not by nature passive or resistant to organizational needs. They have become so as a result of experience in organizations.

The motivation, the potential for development, the capacity for assuming responsibility, the readiness to direct behavior toward organizational goals are all present in people. Management does not put them there. It is the responsibility of management to make it possible for people to recognize and develop these human characteristics for themselves.

The essential task of management is to arrange conditions and methods of operation so that people can achieve their own goals best by directing their own efforts toward organizational objectives.

This is a process primarily of creating opportunities, releasing potential, removing obstacles, encouraging growth, providing guidances. It is what Peter Drucker has called "management by objectives in contrast to management by control."⁸

McGregor mentions companies such as General Mills, Ansul Chemical, and General Electric, which are moving toward the implementation of Theory Y in their efforts to improve

⁷Douglas M. McGregor, "The Human Side of Enterprise," Studies in Personnel and Industrial Psychology, p. 242.

⁸Ibid., p. 248.

performance within the ranks of management. This method encourages the individual to take a greater responsibility for planning and appraising his own contribution to organizational objectives. The beneficial effects on egoistic and self-fulfillment needs accompanying this system are potentially significant.⁹

The General Mills, Inc. manual, "Discussions of Performance and Progress," emphasizes that the performance appraisal discussion should be centered on performance rather than personality and on improvement rather than criticism of past inadequacies. The superior is concerned with helping the man retain his self-respect and pride in his work, of telling him what he is doing well, but of asking him about the things he is not doing well. A review of unaccomplished goals and the why and how of improvement are discussed. The manual discourages dwelling on past errors, faults, and weaknesses. It discourages the use of antagonizing words like reason, logic, and common sense when trying to help a subordinate accept his need for improvement. The counselor and subordinate agree on objectives, standards, and self-improvement programs for the future. Appraisers are urged to achieve mutual understanding of the counselee's responsibilities and accountabilities for the forthcoming period since job content has a tendency to change. It is recognized that the results obtained by the subordinate are the product of not just the man, but the man and his superior together. The superior must be

⁹Ibid., pp. 250-251.

willing to discuss his own shortcomings in failing to guide, instruct, or encourage properly the trainee and he must also be willing to make an effort to change where indicated.

Kenneth E. Richards believes management is missing great opportunities for encouraging personal improvement of subordinates by failing to use post-appraisal counseling. "Once the employee begins to find out things about himself he does not like, he has taken the essential first step along the road to improvement, because he himself is the only person who can bring about real and lasting change in his behavior."¹⁰

When discussing personal coaching, William B. Given, an engineer and Chairman of the Board of the American Brake Shoe Company, indicates that there are two divergent views on the role of seniors in executive development. A number of companies rely heavily on their appraisal and selection system for promoting juniors. Once promoted in the management ranks, it is up to the individual to "sink or swim" on his own. The senior's responsibility is primarily that of establishing the policies, setting the path to follow, selecting the people, and then judging the effectiveness of the completed work.

The divergent opinion is that it is a primary responsibility of the superior to help juniors succeed. They say: "We bet on this man; now our job is to go all out to help him win." The implication then, is that seniors have the additional assignment of coaching in their managerial functions.¹¹

¹⁰Kenneth E. Richards, "Some New Insights into Performance Appraisal," Personnel, July-August, 1960, p. 38.

¹¹William B. Given, "The Engineer Goes into Management," Harvard Business Review, January-February, 1955, pp. 46-47.

Harold Mayfield's article, "In Defense of Performance Appraisal," asserts that there are numerous beneficial results from an effective evaluation-counseling system. Such a system provides an objective, uniform basis for judgment. It lets the employee know where he stands, giving recognition to his abilities and achievements. In helping an employee locate areas in which he can improve and formulate a program for improvement, it opens the door to development and preparation for increased responsibility. Counseling can give the employee an opportunity to express his thoughts and feelings, and can allow supervisor and subordinate to arrive at joint and mutually accepted-action-oriented goals. Mayfield states that even critics of conventional rating approaches concede that the vast majority of people who have been interviewed express satisfaction with the procedure. Contrary to some contentions, Mayfield claims that feelings of achievement are found likewise in supervisors, who "emerge from an appraisal session with a sense of satisfaction." They come away with a deeper understanding and appreciation of their people and often with new ideas for working with long-standing problems.¹²

Norman R. F. Maier, a Professor of Psychology and an industrial consultant, is a prolific writer and one of the most frequently quoted in the fields of industrial counseling and executive development. He asserts that the prevailing thought is that under any circumstances the counseling

¹²Harold Mayfield, "In Defense of Performance Appraisal," Harvard Business Review, March-April, 1960, p. 81.

interview should be a joint undertaking in which both superior and subordinate do considerable talking and listening. It should be structured in the direction of helping and of developing. As he sees it, it should be a cooperative, problem-solving sort of interview in most cases rather than a telling, a telling and selling, or a telling and listening one. He also indicates the supervisor has to decide from his knowledge of the subordinate how much adverse information he requires and can absorb. The counselor must be sensitive to the time he spends on areas that need improvement. The subordinate may leave an interview feeling far more discouraged than the superior had intended if his ego is excessively deflated.¹³

When considering the development of supervisory personnel above the level of acquiring specific skills and techniques, one deals more with abstractions and with concepts than in specific, quantitative, concrete results. Additionally, in the case of executive leadership and its development, it is difficult to do research under controlled and comparable conditions, as natural scientists are often able to accomplish.

An example of an attempt at a more definitive research study is that done by Norman R. F. Maier et al. for the American Management Association in 1961:

This AMA Research Study is based on a detailed quantitative analysis of superior-subordinate communication as practiced by a large number of managers in several different businesses. The original project was carried out by a group of experienced researchers at the University of Michigan working under a grant from the Foundation for Research on Human Behavior. In general,

¹³ Norman R. F. Maier, The Appraisal Interview, P. 167.

the statistical study shows that the typical superior and subordinate in a business situation experience substantial difficulty in communicating with each other.¹⁴

Most universities, business schools, associations, and companies review their executive development training courses or procedures on either a continuing or periodic basis and the increased experience gained continuously adds to this expanding field.

The authors referenced above and throughout this paper have formulated their theories and recommendations based upon research and practical experience in executive training, appraisal, industrial psychology, business consulting, psychological counseling and operational management. Their assumptions about executive development are drawn from wide experience in diversified industries. Many of the authors, in their experiences with consultation and observation, have appraised the effectiveness of successful and unsuccessful executives, determining their suitability for their existing positions as well as for promotion to higher ones.

The remaining chapters will discuss some of the practical and theoretical problems involved in coaching and some useful techniques for overcoming them.

¹⁴Norman R. F. Maier, and Others, Superior-Subordinate Communication in Management, p. 3.

CHAPTER III

COACHING SUBORDINATES

I. THE SUPERIOR AS A COACH

The objective of the executive's, or coach's, job is to utilize the abilities and capacities of others in accomplishing the goals of the organization. Effective utilization means developing the latent potential of subordinates. Coaching subordinates is not some device or technique to be used as a way of administration--it is the essence of administration. The manager is not only a coach, but also an administrator, and in both capacities his success or lack of success is reflected in the performance of subordinates.

Effective administration requires that the successful manager develops several basic skills. He must have sufficient technical skill to accomplish the mechanics of the particular job for which he is responsible. He must develop human skill in working with others in order to be an effective group member. This skill is also essential if he is to build cooperative effort within the team he leads. Finally, the manager must develop sufficient conceptual skill to recognize the interrelationships of the various factors involved in his situation, which will lead him to take that action which achieves the maximum good for the organization. The degree of requirement for each of these skills increases from first to last as one progresses up the management hierarchy.¹

¹Robert L. Katz, "Skills of an Effective Administrator," Harvard Business Review, January-February, 1955, pp. 34-38.

Coaching implies that one of the key responsibilities of the senior executive is to help his subordinates develop these administrative skills. The superior is in the best possible position to accomplish the objective of subordinates' growth. He knows, or should know, his subordinates as individuals better than anyone else in the organization. He must learn their strengths and weaknesses in order to utilize their abilities effectively. As a result of working with the subordinates over a period of time, the superior knows which men do specific things well and their individual abilities and capacities that need strengthening.

There is another reason why the superior is in the most effective position for stimulating his subordinates' growth. He can help further their development through assigning them projects which will augment and strengthen their capacities. People do learn by doing, but the speed with which they learn and the scope of their learning can be increased through opportunities to work on those jobs which improve them in the areas where they are weak. Also, when the subordinate completes an operating task, the occasion is provided for objective counseling. The learning process is thereby related to a concrete working situation which is part of the environment in which he hopes to grow and progress.

Learning in close proximity to the job has powerful advantages over any other mode of development. Knowledge gained in universities, training courses, and crash training programs must, in the final analysis, be applied and put to use in behavior on the job. It is only through usage that such learning

has real meaning to the subordinate, can be reinforced, and can be realistically related to his goals. In the daily operational situation, application of learning occurs in close contact with those who determine the subordinate's future. Under these circumstances, effort to learn is likely to be more active, especially when specific application of techniques takes place under the surveillance of a creative, interested supervisor.

The degree to which people learn executive skills is significantly influenced by the interest the superior has in subordinate development and his ability to communicate and stimulate. He must be willing to take the time and acquire the patience necessary to help his juniors. Coaching must be taken seriously if it is to be effective. If the senior rarely gives subordinates opportunity to learn by doing, they are not likely to grow in experience and abilities. Additionally, time must be set aside for scheduling interviews in spite of pressing operational requirements.

The coaching-counseling objective is not intended as a method of providing specific answers, but to help the subordinate develop his perception and enhance his powers of analysis and discrimination. It is intended as a frame of reference, wherein he can formulate answers that will fit his problems. The desired result is the creation of an atmosphere of learning in the organization that will remind the junior that he is in a growing situation and is not expected to know all the answers. The aim is to provide new concepts, against which past methods may be evaluated, and a background

of knowledge with which to meet and solve the problems of daily occurrence.

II. DEVELOPMENT ON-THE-JOB

Giving subordinates opportunities to perform is a basic element of the coaching process. "There is only one way to develop a man. Put him on a job with real responsibility and insist that he carry it through himself."² Managers who are considered outstanding developers of people usually are the ones who give their men challenging experience opportunities. The effective developer does not use coaching as a method of doing his subordinate's job for him. Instead, he creates situations and experiences that encourage self-learning and development.

Superiors can preclude their juniors from learning opportunities by failing to delegate. The ability to take responsibility is the first test of a manager, but the courage to give responsibility to others is the hallmark of successful executive command. (Delegation of final command authority in the military situation is, of course, incommensurate with doctrine, and it is not intended that such delegation be implied here.) Delegation is the only way to check on the effectiveness of training, to determine the initiative, professional knowledge, and actual competence of subordinates. Effective delegation includes: assignments that are challenging, opportunity to take part in planning and executing a task from

²Chapman, op. cit., p. 29.

start to finish, recognition and allowance for the fact that the subordinate will make errors, and review and appraisal of results for future guidance.

The rate of growth will be greatest when the superior consciously extends the subordinate by assigning tasks which stretch his capabilities a little beyond what he believes he can do. The nature of the assignment and the degree of achievement shown by the subordinate must be considered prior to extending him. The tasks must have reasonably difficult objectives so as to be challenging, but not unattainable goals, which could lead to frustration for the specific individual.

It is realized that many times delegation involves a conflict between getting a job done immediately with the best immediate results, and getting the job done, perhaps less well, but contributing to a subordinate's growth. The exigencies of the service in times of continual crises frequently dictate the areas and times of delegation in the short-run. There are times, however, when the nature of the task and the circumstances permit the use of the opportunity for development purposes. To follow a general policy of continual crisis evidences poor administrative techniques and denies the importance of developing men for future positions of increased responsibility.

III. AN ATMOSPHERE OF APPROVAL AND CONFIDENCE

In the light of the obstacles to improvement, the way to proceed is (a) to establish an atmosphere of approval and build the trainee's confidence in his instructor, thus freeing him to explore and express his feelings and attitudes; and (b) to instill the trainee

with confidence in himself, thus making it possible for him to improve his performance through active participation in an improvement program.³

In the coaching relationship, frequent interviews are necessary on particular features of job performance. It is especially important that a climate of confidence prevail during these coaching sessions so that the trainee maintains the motivation necessary to improve, believes he can improve, and knows what is expected of him. The climate should be one of encouragement and recognition of progress. In the situations where the subordinate is to be extended in ability, the superior must convey a genuine confidence in ability to achieve successful accomplishment. Maintaining the desired climate is dependent primarily upon the superior's belief in the abilities of his people and also on the reciprocation of interest and effort manifested by the subordinate. If the junior has reason, or believes he has reason, to fear that the superior will think less of him because of his questions and problems, the climate of confidence will not be conducive to effective two-way communications.

IV. PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

The requirement of a favorable atmosphere of confidence does not imply that the superior is to give blanket approval of actions in order to assure his subordinates that he has confidence in them. Such approval would be tantamount to abdicating

³Robert L. Katz, "Human Relations Skills Can Be Sharpened," Harvard Business Review, July-August, 1956, p. 63.

responsibility for leadership. The superior's establishment of and adherence to standards of performance on the job gives value to the superior's approval and confidence. Looking at both sides of the matter, maintaining acceptable standards of performance is also necessary for the superior if he is to hold the respect of his juniors. Lack of respect will prevent acceptance of the superior as a coach.

V. GOAL SETTING

The idea of having subordinates establish goals for improvement supplies a positive accent in the coaching process. On the premise that an individual best knows his own capabilities, strengths, weaknesses, needs, and goals, the major responsibility is given to the subordinate to review his performance and to develop specific plans for accomplishing goals.⁴ These goals are then discussed with the superior, who has in mind the broader concept of the organizational goals and meshes his thoughts for improvement with those of the subordinate.

The goals setting approach to coaching proposed here is in contrast to the conventional method of superior-subordinate relationships in the development process. The conventional approach says, "Tell your subordinate what you want him to do and hold him to it. Evaluate his performance according to how well he carries out his assignments and then tell him how

⁴Douglas McGregor, "An Uneasy Look at Performance Appraisal," Harvard Business Review, May-June, 1957, pp. 91-93.

well he's done or what he's got to do better."⁵ The goals setting approach is intended as a collaborative effort in which mutually agreed upon objectives are formulated and which are in consonance with the overall objectives of the organization. At the same time, coach and subordinate come to a mutual agreement on the time perspective for reaching the goals. Subsequent counseling sessions are then planned, for the purpose of reviewing progress enroute. Counseling for executive development purposes will be discussed in greater detail in chapter IV.

One interesting example of the difference in results obtained by the conventional appraisal and goals approaches is provided from the findings of an experiment conducted by Douglas McGregor. He made a study of the feelings and attitudes of two groups of managers and subordinates after they had utilized the two methods. Analysis of the group using the conventional system indicated that power and control remained with the coach and "responsibility for change reside(d) in the hands of the supervisor who is prodding for it rather than springing from the subordinate who should demonstrate it."⁶ The goals approach indicated a more constructive attitude that led to satisfaction, a superior-subordinate team spirit, and positive feelings of responsibility for change and performance on the part of the subordinates.

Individuals tend to work with greater interest and zeal

⁵Blake, op. cit., p. 13.

⁶Ibid., p. 15.

in areas in which they perform well. It does not seem unreasonable to capitalize on these points of evident interest, enjoyment, and strength. The method would be to stress goals and paths toward these goals that are in line with such strengths. Of course, areas of shortcoming need consideration since the unpleasant tasks must also be accomplished satisfactorily. As mentioned previously in chapter I, however, this does not rule out emphasis on planning for improvement based on taking full advantage of one's assets.

VI. THE COACHING TEAM

An essential part of the superior-subordinate coaching relationship is creating a team. The team concept envisioned does not include domination by the superior or lack of delegation of responsibility to subordinates. How often have you encountered the "one man" organization where one professionally competent superior "runs the show" and his subordinates are little more than minor administrative clerks or messengers? More often than not, this authoritarian misinterprets the subservient attitudes of his juniors to mean a happy team spirit. A superior who fails to realize the importance to the subordinate of a sense of belonging to a group and a feeling that he is contributing to the group bars himself from accomplishing an effective coaching job.

Familiarity with the team members. The first step in creating a team is to know the people in the group. Just as the athletic coach must know the capabilities of his players, both for developing their capacities and for utilizing their

abilities in games, so must the administrator know the attributes and inadequacies of the people in his organization. This means conscious efforts to learn individual abilities and capabilities, the capabilities for development, and the things which motivate the individual members of the group.

As the coach increases his knowledge of his subordinates, he will become more interested in them as individuals and more interested in their personal objectives. As this interest grows, the senior will find it easier to assist in development. We are generally able to accomplish much more with those who interest us and with whom, as a result, we are congenial. The comfortable atmosphere and frankness will be productive of a more meaningful coaching relationship. One method of achieving this professional familiarity of subordinates and developing them on-the-job is to get out of the office occasionally and meet them on their ground. The junior is likely to have more confidence in his own office or working area than in front of his superior's desk. In addition, neither he nor his subordinates will fail to notice this visit if it is intended as sincere interest in the junior's development. The individual brings to the relationship his own basic knowledge, skills, experience, and motivations. It is the coach's task to learn to recognize these assets of the individual in order to help him make the most of them.

The subordinate participates. Since the subordinate is the one who must ultimately undertake the effort necessary for improvement, his initiative for self-development will be stimulated by affording him the opportunity for active

participation in his own evaluation and development. Having the subordinate first consider his performance in relation to job requirements and then discuss his thoughts with his superior has the advantage of letting the subordinate take stock of his own performance. Discussion with the superior shows how their thinking compares. There should be a complete understanding of what he is supposed to do before any attempt is made to appraise how well he is doing it and how he may improve. The great majority of people are realistic and can evaluate themselves accurately. Maier holds that the minority who underrate themselves need encouragement and that not too much can be done about the relatively few over-raters' self-opinions since they are immature.⁷ The cooperative approach is realistic in that the subordinate does not determine his own actions in a vacuum, but is significantly influenced by the superior and the situation. Also, this approach enables the superior to put aside his role of judge in appraising performance and become a coach. Working together, evaluator and trainee can reach agreement on the current overall scope of the job as well as establish objectives or goals for performance improvement. By working jointly on evaluation and on goals for the future, they can shift the emphasis to the trainee's future and somewhat away from past performance.⁸

Subordinate participation in the coaching team includes

⁷Maier, op. cit., pp. 174-175.

⁸Robert P. Blake, "Re-examination of Performance Appraisal," Advanced Management, July, 1958, pp. 19-20.

his participation in the professional as well as the personnel decision making process. This means decentralized decision making whenever possible. It means keeping subordinates informed of the overall picture so that they can understand and better anticipate how their suboptimizations will affect the objectives and plans of other departments and the organization as a whole. It means allowing the subordinates to represent their superiors during interfaces with other departments and organizations and allowing them to carry through to completion, the action required. The subordinate needs to feel that while he definitely has something to learn about his job, it is important for him to carry a project through himself and apply whatever principles and skills are available for the particular work in his own way. The priceless thing different people have to offer, is exactly these unique differences. The supervisor cannot be an effective coach if he is the principal producer of the work. He needs to be comfortable about giving up some of his authority and permitting the junior to do a job as he can do it best.

Treating the members fairly. When the administrator limits his coaching to selected favorites in the team or does not provide equal opportunities for on-the-job development, his subordinates are likely to become discontented, apathetic to development, and the team concept will be destroyed. Treating subordinates fairly is an essential element of the superior-subordinate coaching relationship. It is especially important not only that the senior be fair, but that his subordinates believe him to be so. This includes fairness in opportunities

to work on developmental projects, credit or approbation for results, performance evaluation, rotation of job assignments, opportunities to advance in the organization, and many other day-to-day incidents.

VII. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SKILLED COACH

The skilled coach must subjugate his desires to wield the power of his authority over others as a release for his own tensions and dissatisfactions. He must also exercise control over his needs to dominate his subordinates, when his authority, status, or self-approval are questioned in the coaching relationship. The coach's skill here lies in his ability to control his spontaneous personal reactions to minor authority threatening situations and to accept them in the framework of his coaching function, which is to help those for whom he is responsible. The point here is that, while insubordination is not to be condoned, the subordinate must be free to offer suggestions and discuss improvements which may require that the superior revise some of his procedures and objectives.

When disagreement occurs in setting mutually acceptable goals for subordinate self-improvement, it is often unlikely that the junior will be convinced by logic and argument. Argument leads to counter-argument except when neither party is critically concerned with the nature of the issue. Any resolution in this situation is apt to be little more than polite, superficial agreement on matters of little import or on matters not germane to the true problem.

If, however, the coach evidences understanding of his subordinate's feelings, 'does not attempt to force his will upon him, and acknowledges that the subordinate is free to accept or reject his help, then the subordinate is likely to be more receptive to change.⁹

A manager engaged in helping another to learn must first make certain what the learner's problem is, how he feels about it, and what, if anything, he would like to do about it. The resolution by the coach of problems of little importance to the trainee will not mean a great deal. The coach's answers to questions not raised or understood by the subordinate are unlikely to clear up his actual problems. Breakdowns in communications are the result here of the failure of the superior to take the junior's attitudes into account adequately and to begin at his level in developing the coaching relationship. Until the trainee recognizes he has a problem and desires to resolve it, no progress will be made.

Once the coach understands the problems and attitudes of the subordinate, he still cannot impart his experience, understanding, skill, and executive abilities to him. The best he can do is to help the man to see for himself what needs to be done. The junior must possess a need or desire for improvement. The manager can help to arouse ambition or need, but only if the subordinate is free to go forward and use the help in his own way. Offering help on the superior's own terms is often an attempt to cast the learner in the image of

⁹Maler, op. cit., pp. 218-232.

the coach and such help will inevitably fail in its purpose.

Individuals deal with specific situations in their own unique way. This uniqueness is the essence of individuality. A person retains his individual personality when he is permitted to make the judgments, carry the responsibility, and accept the consequences which flow therefrom. Less permissive atmospheres of development probably transform the trainee into an automaton to be manipulated by power seekers and self-appointed gods.

The effective coach has as his outstanding characteristic, the ability to accept difference in his subordinates. The mature leader learns to become comfortable with his own differences. Having full awareness of his own strengths, he does not feel it necessary to rationalize about his weaknesses. Appreciating his own struggle accompanying learning, the hostility, the resistance, the projection, he is able to understand a similar struggle in others. He learns to leave his subordinates alone, to do what they wish with the help he is professionally obligated to offer. He is sufficiently concerned with the learner as a person to permit him to act as he chooses; not as he, the coach, feels he should act.¹⁰

The result of acceptance here is to free the subordinate to the point where he can afford and dare to be his real self, to express, easily and freely, his problems and opinions. The creation of this kind of permissive atmosphere helps to

¹⁰Robert C. Sampson, "Train Executives While They Work," Harvard Business Review, November-December, 1953, pp. 45-47.

release the blocked creativity of most learners. The skilled coach, then accepts the need of the subordinate for self-respect. He understands the difficulties which accompany learning, the resistance to change, the need to be defensive, the need to be right and to win.

The primary action step in reviewing and upgrading performance of people begins with a review of the total situation in which they are operating. This does not involve highly esoteric skills or knowledge, but it does require a type of managerial sophistication which makes it possible for the manager to consider all the factors involved in stimulating or retarding performance. And he must be able and willing to assume the kind of "coaching" role or relationship with his men that will permit daily, two-way communication and exchange of ideas.¹¹

¹¹ Phillip R. Kelly, "Reappraisal of Appraisals," Harvard Business Review, May-June, 1958, p. 65.

CHAPTER IV

DEVELOPMENT COUNSELING

I. PURPOSES OF COUNSELING

Although counseling, as the affirmative element of coaching, may include discussion of a domestic problem or a career decision with subordinates, the primary emphasis is intended to be placed on assisting the subordinate to learn the "how of administration." This learning may involve professional knowledge, administrative procedures, human relations skills, or personality adjustments. By relating the counseling to the jobs performed in the work situation, this method of superior-subordinate interaction will be helpful in improving communications and for effective growth of subordinates. The specific method to be suggested here will, in fact, also be extremely helpful in the domestic problem or career decision situations which are so common in the day-to-day personal relationships of managers and men. The superior does not have to function as a counselor or therapist and he should not attempt to do so without considerable training and experience. The purpose is, rather, to convince the subordinate that the senior wants to understand his ways of doing things, his personal needs, including his problems, and not to impose the superior's own particular ways on anyone else. Problem solving, correction, and learning will take place much more smoothly and effectively in this type of understanding and accepting atmosphere.

Another major advantage of counseling is that it forces

the superior to become better acquainted with his men and their work in order to assist them in developing themselves. This medium for two-way communications can help to build strong personal relationships, which are beneficial in strengthening the management team through mutual understanding and transfer of ideas.¹

This type of coaching encourages the superior to establish and define his performance standards with his assistants. The interview gives the subordinate a clarified picture of how he is doing and in what areas he must improve to meet those standards.

The ultimate goal is counseling sessions that will enable the coach and subordinate to analyze the present situation and establish goals for more effective utilization of the man's strengths.² The emphasis is to be placed on encouraging the individual to strive for his own problem-solving and subsequent self-development.

II. PREPARATION FOR THE INTERVIEW

How well planned and executed the coaching interview is in relation to the particular trainee determines its effectiveness. The manner of a superior's approach permeates the entire interview. If he demonstrates that he wants to help, if he recognizes the value of the subordinate and his

¹"Executive Coaching Catches On," Business Week, March 9, 1957, p. 68.

²J. F. Tripician, "Face-to-Face-Appraisal as a Communications Tool," Personnel, July-August, 1961, pp. 72-75.

accomplishments, and if he shows the purpose to be one of interest in development, the interview has strong possibilities of being perceived in a constructive light by the junior.³

Adequate thought and preparation will assist in conveying this constructive approach. The counselor should review his assistant's job requirements, personal record, stated objectives, current accomplishments, and present progress. Although the interview is to be essentially trainee-oriented, the coach should make note of the general objectives to be covered and any specific points of particular importance. At this time, he may be able to anticipate some of the questions which may be raised by the individual and formulate his tentative answers or more appropriately visualize how he will encourage the subordinate to find his own solutions. Being adequately prepared to discuss areas for recognition or praise is also of the utmost importance.

Although not required or recommended, if the evaluation report is to be used for counseling purposes, the reasons for each evaluation should be vividly in mind prior to the interview. If the form is utilized, the senior should be prepared to substantiate each rating with specific examples of performance and behavior.

Scheduling a mutually convenient time for the counseling session and advising the subordinate of its nature in advance will facilitate reduction in tension and anxiety. In addition,

³U. S. Civil Service Commission, Developing Management Potential through Appraisal Panels, Personnel Management Series No. 8, March, 1955, p. 6.

proper scheduling should include privacy without interruptions. These preparations are minimal and reflect not only interest and sincerity, but common courtesy to the individual.

III. GAINING ACCEPTANCE

The development counseling theory proposed calls for decision making on a man-to-man basis. This recognizes that allowing people to share in deciding their own fate results in their greater willingness to carry out the decision reached. Maier has called this the individual's acceptance of the decision.⁴

The principle here is derived from Barnard's acceptance theory of authority. Barnard implies that a communication, or order, carries authority only if it is accepted by the recipient as authoritative. An individual decides for himself which specific communications he will obey. In order for an order to carry authority, individuals must believe that obeying this communication will best serve their interests. If they do not believe this, they will disobey or comply in a perfunctory manner; consequently, the communication carries little or no authority. Barnard states that a subordinate will accept a communication if: he understands it, he believes that to obey it will be in his best interests at the time, he believes the order to be consistent with the purpose of the organization, and he is mentally and physically capable of

⁴Norman R. F. Maier and Others, Superior-Subordinate Communication in Management, p. 34.

complying with it.⁵

Gaining acceptance will be a major problem in the beginning phase. The superior must first establish rapport with the subordinate and overcome resistance to the counselor as a person, as well as what he stands for and the idea of change itself. The senior can begin by asking questions about problems. He will probably note in subsequent interviews, when greater personal acceptance is gained, that the initial answers given were ones which the subordinate believed the senior wanted to hear. The counselor must convey at this early stage that he is not going to dominate the interview, hold training sessions, offer prolific advice, or make decisions for him. The superior will offer his knowledge and skills in terms clearly understandable to the junior as possible suggestions.

Often barriers to acceptance arise due to misunderstandings between interview participants. These misunderstandings may occur regardless of a mutual interest in the subordinate's improvement. The subordinate's desire to succeed may cause him to mask his deficiencies and thus protect himself from possible criticism. Determining the person's feelings and point of view concerning his job and, in turn, utilizing the interview as a discussion in which both participate will help to clarify such misunderstandings.

In summary, resistance in the interview is likely to

⁵Chester I. Barnard, The Functions of the Executive, pp. 68, 168-174.

occur when the subordinate's self-concept differs from the concept held by the supervisor. Then defense mechanisms come into play, especially rationalization, argumentation, or withdrawal. It is necessary, therefore, that the senior acquire considerable knowledge of his subordinate's self-concept and to work through that concept rather than to attack it.⁶

IV. INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES

Review of the literature suggests two basic approaches, each with several variations. The choice of the basic approach or modification thereto depends upon the counselor's objective, the personal traits of counselor and counselee, and the subordinate's degree of success in his job.

The directive approach. The commonly used directive approach entails: informing the subordinate of the degree of success he has achieved on his performance evaluation; gaining his acceptance of the validity and meaning of the evaluation; and motivating him to follow a plan outlined for his improvement.

The directive group assumes that the counselor selects the desirable and socially approved goal which the client is to attain, and then directs his efforts toward helping the subject to attain it. An unstated implication is that the counselor is superior to the client, since the latter is assumed to be incapable of accepting full responsibility for choosing his own goal.⁷

Motivation for improvement may be gained through the use

⁶Kenneth E. Richards, "A New Concept of Performance Appraisal," Journal of Business, July, 1959, pp. 241-242.

⁷Rogers, op. cit., p. 26.

of positive or negative sanctions or a combination of the two. This system is usually successful where the counselee has a great deal of genuine respect for an outstanding superior and possesses the desire to correct his weaknesses when revealed to him.

Consider the questionable assumptions involved in the directive approach: (1) that the counselor fully understands the subordinate's weaknesses and problems, (2) that he knows all the facts and issues involved, (3) that he knows the best solution, and (4) that he is capable of getting the trainee to perceive his own situation and accept the counselor's solution.⁸ In the light of these assumptions and the fact that the direction the superior gives tends to inhibit expression by the subordinate in any but the prescribed area, an atmosphere of self-development is unlikely. The probable result will be manifestations of defensive behavior, attempts to cover hostility, inhibition of independent judgment, resistance to change, and failure of two-way communications.⁹

The non-directive approach. Many of the concepts and techniques of non-directive counseling were developed by Carl R. Rogers in his work in psychotherapy and he is the most widely referenced authority in the field. His concept of nondirectivity is relatively a pure one in that he considers anything other than a passive approach by the counselor to be contrary to the principles of the nondirective procedure

⁸Ibid., pp. 116-118.

⁹Norman R. F. Maier, "Three Types of Appraisal Interview," Personnel, March-April, 1958, pp. 28-32.

and would defeat its purpose. However, most practitioners in work and development counseling contend that no single systematic method of counseling is adequate for the diverse situations which may be encountered. Many, therefore, utilize an eclectic approach which draws upon the best from the various systematic approaches.¹⁰ The non-directive methods and skills described in this paper are eclectic in the sense that they recommend a few modifications of the pure approach, which were felt appropriate in the military environment.

The rationale for the essentially non-directive approach recommended here is that in contrast to being directed along a path to improvement, the optimal method is for a subordinate to solve his own problems through his own resources. Utilizing this approach, defensive behavior can be released, resistance to change reduced, hostility toward the superior minimized, and the individual may be made to feel accepted and important to the organization.

Frequently in work counseling, even as in psychotherapy, employees ask for help, not anticipating truthful answers, but with the hope of getting the supervisor to take their side and give the answer they want. They may also seek answers in order to transfer responsibility for decisions to the counselor. They then may feel compelled to pursue the action recommended and consequently take less personal responsibility for results. Rogers states that, faced with

¹⁰ C. H. Patterson, Counseling and Psychotherapy: Theory and Practice, pp. 136-140.

this counseling situation, "The only realistic answer that can possibly be found is in terms of his (employee's) own abilities and desires to deal with the situation."¹¹ These realistic answers for the subordinate may be released through the non-directive approach.

One of the basic questions which may arise in the use on nondirectivity in counseling in the armed service is whether it is practicable. This question may be raised in light of the directive nature of officers' training and their basically directive-oriented mode of operation. It is asserted here that counseling is the essential element in subordinate development and the non-directive method is the safest and easiest to use. Inadequate knowledge and training can do no harm. Since this method stimulates the subordinate to solve his own problems, the worst that can happen is that a person, very much in need of professional counseling, is delayed in seeking it or else that the method fails to do any good.¹² It is a skill that the officer can learn on his own, read about, and try as he sees fit with little risk involved. He needs only to develop interest in subordinate development and an inclination to learn something about it.

One of the key skills in this approach is active listening. This is particularly important since one of the principal aims of nondirectivity is the encouragement of catharsis. Catharsis implies that the counselee reduces his anxieties,

¹¹Rogers, op. cit., pp. 160-163.

¹²Norman R. F. Maier, The Appraisal Interview, p. 19.

fears, and frustrations by releasing or talking them out. It is quite common for us to feel better about a problem or disappointment after telling someone about it and this is what is implied here.¹³ The counselor must act primarily as an attentive listening post. He refrains from cross-examining, criticizing, or taking the subordinate's side and sympathizing with him. The listener passes no judgment whatsoever, but merely understands and encourages the person to talk. The supervisor listens, sifting the important points from the facts and opinions, and may take notes for reference and to show interest. He can thereby gain clues that will help him in understanding and helping the junior. Also, by active, sincerely interested listening, he demonstrates a willingness to consider the other person. This will incline the latter to take more interest in listening to him.

Accompanying active listening is the technique of reflecting the subordinate's feelings and ideas. Whenever the junior responds emotionally, it is helpful to mirror or reflect the feeling expressed by him. The interviewer restates in slightly different words what the trainee says, paying attention to feelings of confusion, hostility, and guilt. This encourages further expression of feelings that are difficult to face and shows understanding and acceptance of the individual by the counselor. This outpouring of feelings has the benefit of releasing the frustrations of the counselee and he can then begin to face and solve some of his problems.

¹³Ibid., p. 229; Rogers, Op. cit., pp. 131-173.

Rephrasing and reflecting the subordinate's problems help him discover wherein his actions or lack thereof have contributed to the situations. When he can see this, he will have taken a major step toward formulating a plan for improvement. The superior also considers all of the ideas presented and summarizes them in slightly different terminology. Thus, the superior tests his understanding of the ideas and exhibits interest in the subordinate and interest in considering recommended changes.¹⁴

Another useful skill in non-directive interviewing is the counselor's use of questions. Once a permissive atmosphere of two-way communications and a state of motivation have been established, skillful exploratory questions will help the interviewer evoke the thoughts and feelings of the counselee. This can assist the subordinate in thinking more clearly and constructively about where his weaknesses lie and what to do about them. The questions also contain no attempt to criticize or evaluate; rather they allow the counselor to skillfully guide the discussion. This is recommended especially when the subordinate lacks constructive ideas or suggests changes that are totally out of context with organizational objectives. This guidance of the interview does not mean that the counselor imposes his views, but is intended in the spirit of the team approach, whereby the superior and subordinate explore problem areas together.¹⁵

¹⁴Norman R. F. Maier, Principles of Human Relations, pp. 418-422.

¹⁵Harry W. Hepner, Perceptive Management and Supervision, pp. 330-333.

The sequence of the non-directive counseling process would generally be as follows: (1) The superior establishes a permissive atmosphere, an atmosphere of acceptance. (2) The subordinate is encouraged to talk out his feelings and problems, resulting in catharsis or release of emotion. (3) Self-insight is gained as the subordinate begins to examine his thoughts, feelings, and experiences more objectively. As he continues to discuss his situation, he comes to see himself more realistically, accepts what has taken place and recognizes relationships for what they are. (4) He then contemplates alternative plans and more satisfactory ways of coping with situations. (5) He ultimately reaches a decision, mutually agreed upon by the superior, and then is free to take independent action to achieve his goals.

Following are some guidelines summarizing the important features of non-directive counseling: (1) Make certain that the subordinate understands the permissive nature of the counseling situation; if your actions do not clarify it, then explain the procedure. (2) Avoid embarrassing silences during the early stages of counseling. A non-directive lead is suitable, such as "Would you like to go into that a little further?" (3) Let pauses occur after the relationship has been firmly established to allow the subordinate time to compose his thoughts. (4) Use phrases such as, "M-hm," and "I see," to show simple acceptance of the feelings expressed by the counselee. (5) Accept without shock any feeling divulged; this gives the individual reassurance and encourages full expression. (6) Wait for a natural pause in the conversation

to give a response if one is needed. (7) In responding, show acceptance as above or reflect the feelings of the subordinate as fairly and accurately as possible. (8) Be alert for questions expressing attitudes by the subordinate; reflect the attitudes, but do not answer the question. (9) Take notes which will aid you in later analysis, indicate interest, and help cover pauses. (10) Allow the man to read them at the end of the interview if he so requests. This may assist him in gaining insight. (11) If it becomes necessary to define or redefine the counseling relationship at the beginning or in later stages of the process, do so in terms of the junior's role in directing the conversation and reaching decisions. (12) Indicate a new topic of conversation only when an impasse has been reached, but then let the subordinate develop the topic as he wishes. (13) Interpret feelings for the counselee only when necessary for clarification, and then only to the extent previously expressed and only in his or similar terms. (14) Listen to the individual; be friendly and patient, but listen critically. (15) Be alert for the feeling being expressed, not just the manner of expression or context. (16) Requested answers should only be given in the late stages of counseling and only if it (a) clarifies a choice, (b) implements a decision-made by the person or (c) helps him to discover the "real" problem. (17) Maintain your respect for the subordinate as an individual human being.

Some things to avoid in the counseling process include:

(1) Do not judge, evaluate, diagnose or solve the statements or problems of the subordinate for him; the essence of the

non-directive approach is that he do these things. (2) Do not criticize, morally condemn, or argue. (3) Do not commiserate with the junior or take sides in one of his controversies. (4) Do not try to interpret feelings if you are not sure of yourself. (5) Do not resort to authority; if the situation requires the exercise of your authority, it is an official relationship, not a counseling one. (6) Do not hesitate to say, "I do not understand," if you are finding it difficult to reflect the individual's feelings. (7) And finally, do not be surprised by a temporary relapse after a particularly revealing session of introspection; the subordinate is probably trying to adjust to his newly acquired insight.

V. TERMINATING THE INTERVIEW

The interview should be terminated when the subordinate has had ample time to review his problems and release any emotional tensions that exist, when plans of action have been co-operatively developed, and when both have a feeling of satisfaction concerning the results obtained. The interviewee should be encouraged to summarize the points reviewed and to establish his personal goals for improvement during the succeeding period. The junior should also set up a time reference for attaining these goals so that both can ascertain whether the proposed changes ultimately are achieved and can check on the status of the progress in the interim. Once the subordinate has designed a mutually satisfactory plan of action, the superior should at this time assign him the responsibility for its efficacy.

In closing, the superior must assure the subordinate of continued interest in his progress and that the discussion of the interview may be reopened at the next session or at any time before then. To avoid the error of relying on a single interview to carry over for a year or even six months, the superior must plan to help the man review progress from time to time. A series of formal interviews may be unnecessary or even undesirable. Follow-up can take place in the course of day-to-day work. Interest, encouragement, expressed confidence, and, where warranted, information on knowledge of results can all reinforce the subordinate's efforts.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

I. SUMMARY

Objective, soul-searching analysis reveals that officers tend to disregard their responsibilities in the development of their subordinates. They are left on their own, except when being reprimanded; are expected to make few errors; expected to have the motivation and ability to learn; and expected to develop themselves. Superiors use many crutches and excuses for their failure to perform the important administrative function of coaching.

Learning theory points to the importance of knowledge of results in improving performance. Leadership theory indicates the importance of two-way communications and the feeling of importance and belonging in maintaining high morale and motivation for improvement. A healthy atmosphere for acceptance of the coaching relationship depends upon the attitude of the command and subsequently his departmental supervisors. The subordinate must be given challenging assignments and allowed to carry them to completion without fear of condemnation.

The challenges to the coach by the subordinate include: difference of perception, resistance to change, defense mechanisms, lack of motivation, emotional immaturity, and lack of acceptance. The first step in overcoming these challenges is for the coach to perceive them and then to get the subordinate to see them for himself.

The present trend in executive development is away from the superior-oriented directive approach of evaluation, counseling and follow-up. These authoritarian measures, while attractive to the weak leader, are not productive of permanent, meaningful development. This occurs because the subordinate does not accept the directive approach of the superior as a sincere effort to develop him personally. The senior's solutions and courses for remedial action may be totally unacceptable to the subordinate and not germane to his "real" problem.

The trend is towards a mutual goal setting approach wherein coach and subordinate engage in permissive two-way communications in an effort to help the subordinate solve his own problems and develop improvement objectives. The senior is available to help the junior in his thinking and talking process; is available for occasional questions of a suggestive nature; and he helps the man see his situation in the light of overall organizational objectives.

Successful coaching requires not only that the subordinate be given the opportunity to perform in challenging situations that will enhance his development, but that the superior manifest confidence in his abilities and potentialities. The efforts of the coaching relationship should be concentrated on job clarification, standards of performance, mutual problem-solving, and joint goal setting. The coach does not dominate, argue, or force his solutions. He gets to know his men, how they feel, and what they are capable of doing. He accepts their differences and respects their individuality.

Non-directive counseling requires little training and

experience. It places its emphasis on encouraging the interviewee to do the majority of the talking with the object of encouraging self-appraisal and self-originated solutions to problems. The outpouring of thoughts and ideas results in catharsis which releases tension and helps the individual gain insight in seeing himself and his problems realistically. The skills required by the coach are not difficult to acquire and include the practices of: active listening, reflecting feelings, and skillful questioning. The primary emphasis in nondirectivity, as in the whole coaching process, is respect for the subordinate as an individual.

II. CONCLUSIONS

Narrow interpretation of regulations, apathy, rationalization, and authoritarianism too often cause seniors to slight one of their most important responsibilities, the development of subordinates.

Individual commanders should emphasize the importance of executive development to the individual, the unit, and the service. They should, by their statements and actions, help create an atmosphere of administration that requires supervisors to coach; requires sufficient delegation to enable subordinates to perform individually; makes allowances for error in the learning process; and provides for feedback of results.

It is not required nor is it recommended that the commander show the subordinate the fitness report. Considering the extremely powerful and authoritarian position of the

military commander, it is probably not practical nor appropriate for him to participate actively in the coaching process. It is unlikely that a permissive relationship could or should be established.

At the departmental level, however, the senior officers do not have ultimate responsibility for the fitness report. They are in contact with their subordinates in a day-to-day, on-the-job relationship, have the authority to delegate, are basically responsible for their subordinates' actions, and should know their men well enough to take an active interest in their development. This interest will not only pay dividends in improved individual performance, but will increase morale and subordinate loyalty. The mutual goal setting approach and associated follow-up not only encourages self-analysis, individuality, and initiative, it provides the supervisor with an extremely practical and useful procedure for administrative control.

The principal argument in opposition to this concept of coaching will probably continue to be its time consuming nature. This is, of course, a major consideration for the senior who finds himself overworked and therefore has difficulty meeting his daily commitments, aside from implementing constructive changes which he deems appropriate. However, after the first few sessions, the superior's counseling work load should diminish sharply since most of his officers will manifest considerable enthusiasm along with the increased interest in their development. Occasional brief review sessions will probably suffice after insight has been gained and initial

goals determined. Two of the main points of the coaching process are decentralized decision making and delegation. This concept has the two-fold purpose of developing subordinates and spreading the work load in an equitable manner. Decentralizing the department's functions coupled with the increased motivation and efficiency of subordinates should free the superior for counseling and higher level conceptual planning.

The non-directive counseling approach provides a practical, easy to use medium for accomplishing the desired objectives. It requires essentially that the supervisor know his subordinates, have faith in them, and listen long enough for them to express their latent feelings and ideas. Surely this is not too difficult. Is it too much to ask? It is hypothesized that the time spent in this endeavor will more than pay for itself in savings resulting from better performance, higher officer retention rate, and in increased unit morale.

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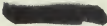
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